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HOW A FREE PEOPLE

CONDUCT A LONG WAR:

A CHAPTER FROM ENGLISH HISTORY

BY

CHARLES J. STILLÉ.



PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN.

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“History, if it be not the merest toy, the idlest pastime of our vacant hours, is the record of the onward march of Humanity towards an end. Where there is no belief in such an end, and therefore no advance towards it, no stirrings of a Divine Word in a people's bosom, where not as yet the beast's heart has been taken away, and a man's heart given, there History cannot be said to be. They belong not, therefore, to History, least of all to sacred History, those Babels, those cities of confusion, those huge pens, into which by force and fraud, the early hunters of men, the Nimrods and the Sesostrises drave, and compelled their fellows: and Scripture is only most true to its idea while it passes them almost or wholly in silence by, while it lingers rather on the plains of Mamre with the man that “believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness,” than by “populous No” or great Babylon, where no faith existed but in the blind powers of nature, and the brute forces of the natural man.”

TRENCH'S HULSEAN LECTURE,

The Unity of Scripture.

Ms. A. 9. 2. 0. 12. 1. 1. 2.

WE have known hitherto in this country so little of the actual realities of war on a grand scale, that many are beginning to look upon the violent opposition to the government, and the slowness of the progress of our arms, as signs of hopeless discouragement. History, however, shows us that these are the inevitable incidents of all wars waged by a free people. This might be abundantly illustrated by many remarkable events in English history, from the days of the great Rebellion down through the campaigns of the Prince of Orange, and of Marlborough, to the wars which grew out of the events of the French Revolution. War is always entered upon amidst a vast deal of popular enthusiasm, which is utterly unreasoning. It is the universal voice of history, that such enthusiasm is wholly unreliable in supporting the prolonged and manifold burdens which are inseparable from every war waged on an extensive scale, and for a long period. The popular idea of war is a speedy and decisive victory, and an

withstanding the obstacles which, owing to a perverted public opinion, exist within the nation itself. These difficulties, although they inhere in the very nature of a free government, often prove, as we shall see, more fruitful of embarrassment to the favourable prosecution of a war, than the active operations of the enemy.

We propose to illustrate the propositions which we have advanced by a study of the series of campaigns known in English history as the Peninsular War. We select this particular war because we think that in many of its events, and in the policy which sustained it, there are to be observed many important, almost startling parallelisms with our present struggle. We have, of course, no reference to any similarity existing in the principle which produced the two wars, but rather to the striking resemblance in the modes adopted by the two people for prosecuting war on a grand scale, and for the vindication of a principle regarded as of vital importance by them.

The Peninsular War on the part of England, as was contended by the ministry during its progress, and as is now universally recognised, was a struggle not only to maintain her commercial supremacy, (which was then, as it is now, her life,) but also to protect her own soil from invasion by the French, by transferring the scene of conflict to distant Spain. The general purpose of assisting the alliance against

Napoleon seems always to have been a subordinate motive. It is now admitted by all historians, that upon success in this war depended not only England's rank among nations, but her very existence as an independent people. The war was carried on for more than five years, and on a scale, so far as the number of men and the extent of the military operations are concerned, until then wholly unattempted by England in her European wars. The result, as it need not be said, was not only to crown the British arms with the most brilliant and undying lustre, but also to retain permanently in their places the party whose only title to public favour was that they had carried on the war against the most serious obstacles, and brought it to a successful termination. Thus was delayed, it may be remarked, for at least twenty years, the adoption of those measures of reform which at last gave to England that place in modern civilization which had long before been reached by most of the nations of the Continent by passing through the trials of a bloody revolution. If we, then, in our dark hours, are inclined to doubt and despondency as to the final result, let us not forget the ordeal through which England successfully passed. We shall find that, in the commencement, there was the same wild and unreasoning enthusiasm with which we are familiar; the same bitter abuse and denunciation of the government at the first reverses; the same impatient and ignorant criticism of military opera-

tions; the same factious and disloyal opposition on the part of a powerful party; the same discouragement and despondency at times on the part of the true and loyal; the same prophecies of the utter hopelessness of success; the same complaints of grievous and burdensome taxation, and predictions of the utter financial ruin of the country; the same violent attacks upon the government for its arbitrary decrees, and particularly for the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*; the same difficulties arising from the inexperience of the army; and the same weakness on the part of the government in not boldly and energetically supporting the army in the field. These are some of the more striking parallelisms between the Peninsular War and our own struggle, which a slight sketch of the progress of that war will render very apparent.

The insurrection in Spain which followed immediately upon a knowledge of the intrigues of Napoleon at Bayonne, in April 1807, by which the royal family was entrapped into an abdication of its right to the throne, and Joseph Bonaparte made king of that country, roused universal admiration and enthusiasm in England. It was thought by all parties that an obstacle to the further progress of Napoleon's schemes of the most formidable character had at last been found. It was the first popular insurrection in any country against Napoleon's power, and consequently, when the deputies from the Asturias reached Eng-

land imploring succour, their appeals excited the popular feeling to the highest pitch, and the opposite parties in Parliament and the country vied with each other in demanding that England should aid the insurrection with the whole of her military power. It is curious to observe, that when the question of aid was brought before Parliament, Mr. Canning and Mr. Sheridan, who had probably never acted together before on any political question, rivalled each other in their praise of the Spaniards, and in their expressions of hope and belief that Napoleon had at last taken a step which would speedily prove fatal to him. Large supplies were voted by acclamation, and an important expedition, afterwards operating in two columns, one under the command of Sir John Moore, the other under that of Sir Arthur Wellesley, was dispatched to the Peninsula to aid the insurgents. It is not our purpose to trace the progress of this expedition, but merely to notice the effect which its immediate results, the retreat to Corunna, and the Convention of Cintra, produced upon popular feeling in England. As we look back on the history of that time, the folly and madness which seized upon the popular mind when the terms of the Convention of Cintra became known, can only be explained by recalling the high-wrought and extravagant expectations of immediate success with which the war had been entered upon. By this Convention, and as the result of a single battle, Portugal

was wholly evacuated by the French; yet such were the unreasonable demands of public opinion, that because the whole French army had not been made prisoners of war, the Ministry was almost swept away by the outburst, and it could only control the storm by removing the two generals highest in rank. It required all the family and political influence of the third, Sir Arthur Wellesley, to enable him to retain his position in the army. The disastrous retreat of Sir John Moore's army to Corunna, and the easy triumphs of the French at that period throughout all Spain, plunged the English into despair. Going from one extreme to another, men who, only three months before, had quarrelled with the army in Portugal because it had not given them the spectacle of a French marshal and twenty thousand of his soldiers as prisoners of war at Spithead, now spoke openly of the folly of any attempt at all on the part of England to resist the progress of the French arms in the Peninsula. In Parliament there was the usual lame apology for disaster, an attempt to shift the responsibility from the Ministry to the General in command; but the great fact, that all their hopes had been disappointed still remained, and after the explanations of the government the general despondency became more gloomy than ever. It is not difficult in the light of history to see where the blame of failure should rest. Any one who is disposed now to sneer and cavil at the shortcomings of our own

administration, to impute to it views short-sighted and impracticable in their policy, and to blame it for want of energy and vigour in the prosecution of the war, has only to turn to Colonel Napier's account of the stupid blunders of the English government, its absurd and contradictory orders, its absolute ignorance not only of the elementary principles of all war, but of the very nature of the country in which the army was to operate, and of the resources of the enemy, to be convinced that had its mode of carrying on hostilities, (which was the popular one,) been adopted, in six months not an English soldier would have remained in the Peninsula except as a prisoner of war. The history of this campaign contains important lessons for us; it shows conclusively that the immediate results of war are never equal to the public expectation, and that if this public expectation, defeated by the imbecility of the government, or soured by disaster in the field, is to be the sole rule by which military operations are to be judged, no war for the defence of a principle can long be carried on.

Fortunately for the fame and the power of England, the Ministry, although ignorant of the true mode of prosecuting hostilities, had sense enough to perceive that their only true policy was perseverance. They were strong enough to resist the formidable opposition which the events we have referred to developed in Parliament and the country, and, undismayed by the experience of the past, concluded a

treaty with the Provisional Government of Spain, by which they pledged England never to abandon the national cause until the French were driven across the Pyrenees. The army was placed upon a better footing, was largely reinforced, and Sir Arthur Wellesley was appointed to the chief command. The government, not yet wholly awakened from its illusions, still thought it practicable to reach Madrid in a single campaign, and to that end the efforts of Wellington were directed. It became necessary first to dislodge Soult at Oporto, and the magnificent victory of the English, gained by the passage of the Douro at that point, went far to revive confidence at home in the invincibility of their army. Yet so clear is it that victory in war often depends upon what, for some better name, we may call mere good fortune, that we have the authority of the Duke of Wellington himself for saying, that this army, which had just exhibited such prodigies of valour, was then in such a state of demoralization, that although "excellent on parade, excellent to fight, it was worse than an enemy in a country, and liable to dissolution alike by success or defeat." Certainly no severer criticism has ever been justified by the inexperience and want of discipline of our own raw levies than that contained in this memorable declaration. A little reflection and candour might perhaps teach us, as it did the English, that nothing can compensate for the want of experience, and that every allowance

is to be made for disasters where it is necessary to educate both officers and soldiers in the actual presence of the enemy. Wellington soon afterwards moved towards the Spanish frontier, hoping by a junction with the army under Cuesta to fight a battle with the French which would open to him the road to the capital. The battle was fought at Talavera, and although it has since been claimed by the English as one of their proudest victories, and the name of TALAVERA is now inscribed upon the standards of the regiments who took part in it with those of Salamanca and Vittoria, yet the result was in the end, that Wellington was obliged to retreat to Lisbon just three months after he had set out from that place, having left his wounded in the hands of the French, having escaped as if by a miracle from being wholly cut off in his retreat, and having lost one-third of his army in battle and by disease. Of course the blame was thrown upon the want of co-operation on the part of the Spaniards. This we have nothing to do with; it is the result of the campaign with which we are concerned. Dependence upon the Spaniards was certainly, as it turned out, a fault, but it was one of the fair chances of war, and it was a fault in which Wellington, made wise by experience, was never again detected.

When the news of the untoward result of this campaign reached England, the clamour against the government and against Wellington was quite as

violent as that excited by the disasters of Sir John Moore's army. The opposition in Parliament took advantage of this feeling to rouse public opinion to such a manifestation as might compel the termination of the war in the Peninsula and drive the ministry from office. The Common Council of London, probably a fair exponent of the opinions of the middle class, petitioned the King not to confirm the grant of £2000 a year, which the Ministry had succeeded in getting Parliament to vote to Wellington. The petitioners ridiculed the idea that a battle attended with such results should be called a victory. "It should rather be called a *calamity*," they said, "since we were obliged to seek safety in a precipitate flight, abandoning many thousands of our wounded countrymen into the hands of the French." In the opinion of the strategists in the Common Council and of their friends in Parliament, Wellington might be a brave officer, but he was no general; he had neglected the protection of his flanks and his line of communication. When it is remembered, that at this very time, Wellington, profiting by the experience of the past, was diligently making his army really effective within the lines of Torres Vedras, from which stronghold it was in due time to sally forth like a giant refreshed, never to rest until it had planted the English flag on the heights of Toulouse, we may perhaps smile at the presumption of those who, sincere well-wishers to the cause, displayed only their ignorance

in their criticism. But what shall be said of those who, knowing better, being quite able to understand the wisdom of the policy adopted by the General to insure success in the stupendous enterprise in which the country was engaged, yet with a factious spirit and with the sole object of getting into power themselves, took advantage of the excitement of the ignorant multitude to paralyze the energies of the government?

That hideous moral leprosy, which seems to be the sad but invariable attendant upon all political discussions in a free government, corrupting the very sources of public life, breeding only the base spirit of faction, had taken complete possession of the opposition, and in its sordid calculations, the dishonour of the country, or the danger of the army, was as nothing provided the office, the power, and the patronage of the government were secured in their hands. It mattered little to them, provided they could drive the ministry from office, whether its downfall was brought about by blunders in Spain, or by the King's obstinacy about Catholic Emancipation, or by an obscure quarrel about the influence of the Lords of the bed-chamber. The sincerity of these declamations of the opposition was curiously enough put to the test some time afterwards, when the ministry, wearied by the factious demagogueism with which all their measures were assailed, and understanding perfectly their significance, boldly challenged their

opponents, if they were in earnest, to make a definite motion in the House of Commons, that Portugal should be abandoned to its fate. This move completely unmasked their game, and for a time silenced the clamour, for it was perfectly understood on all hands, that deep in the popular heart, undisturbed by the storms which swept over its surface, there was a thorough and abiding conviction of the absolute necessity of resisting the progress of Napoleon's arms, and that the real safety of England herself required that that resistance should then be made in Spain. Still this noisy clamour did immense mischief; it weakened the government, it prolonged the strife, it alarmed the timid, it discouraged the true, and it so far imposed upon Napoleon himself, that thinking that in these angry invectives against the government he found the real exponent of English sentiment, he concluded, not unnaturally, that the people were tired and disgusted with the war, and that the privations which it occasioned were like a cancer, slowly but surely eating out the sources of national life.

In the midst of these violent tumults at home, Wellington was silently preparing for his great work within the lines of Torres Vedras. It would not be easy to overrate the difficulties by which he was surrounded. He was fully aware of the outcry which had been raised against him; he knew that from a Cabinet so weakened by internal dissensions as to be on the verge of overthrow from the vigorous assaults of

the opposition, and from its own unpopularity occasioned by the failure of the Walcheren expedition, and the disasters in the Peninsula, he could expect no thorough and reliable support. Indeed the government, almost in despair, threw the whole responsibility for the military measures on the Continent on him alone. He accepted the responsibility in a most magnanimous spirit. "I conceive," he writes, "that the honour and the interests of the country require that we should hold our position here as long as possible, and, please God, I will maintain it as long as I can. I will neither endeavour to shift from my own shoulders on those of the ministers the responsibility for the failure, by calling for means which I know they cannot give, and which perhaps would not add materially to the facility of attaining our object; nor will I give to the ministers, who are not strong, and who must feel the delicacy of their own situation, an excuse for withdrawing the army from a position which, in my opinion, the honour and interest of the country require they should maintain as long as possible." Animated by this heroic sense of duty, the Commander-in-Chief prepared to contend against the 200,000 men under Massena, whom Napoleon had sent to chase him into the sea. He had, to oppose this immense force, only 25,000 English soldiers, and about the same number of Portuguese tolerably organized. Secure within the lines of Torres Vedras, he quietly waited until the want of provisions, and

the utter hopelessness of an assault upon his position forced upon Massenna the necessity of retreating. Then instantly pursuing, in a series of battles, of almost daily occurrence, he drove Massena out of Portugal, and reached once more the Spanish frontier in May, 1811, nearly three years after the English had sent an army to the assistance of the Peninsula. Here he rested for a long time, making preparations for the siege of Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, operations requiring time, and the success of which was essential to the safety of the army in its further progress. Still, so little was Wellington's position, military and political, understood in England even at that time, after all the proofs he had given of consummate ability, that public clamour was again roused against the mode adopted by him for conducting the war. As there were no disasters at which to grumble, people talked of "barren victories," because like those of Crecy and Azincourt, they brought no territorial acquisitions, forgetting then what they have never been weary of boastingly proclaiming since, that these victories were the best proofs that their army was distinguished by the highest military qualities, which, properly directed and supported, were capable of achieving the most glorious results. So profound was the conviction of the immense superiority of the French, both in numbers, and in the quality of their troops, that the public mind was in a state of feverish anxiety, and many of the stoutest

hearts gave way to despair. About this period Sir Walter Scott writes to Mr. Ellis: "These cursed, double cursed news (from Spain) have sunk my spirits so much, that I am almost at disbelieving a Providence; God forgive me, but I think some evil demon has been permitted in the shape of this tyrannical monster, whom God has sent on the nations visited in his anger. The spring-tide may, for aught I know, break upon *us* in the next session of Parliament. There is an evil fate upon us in all we do at home or abroad." So Sir James Mackintosh, writing to Gentz, at Vienna: "I believe, like you, in a resurrection, because I believe in the immortality of civilization, but when, and by whom, and in what form, are questions which I have not the sagacity to answer, and on which it would be boldness to hazard a conjecture. A dark and stormy night, a black series of ages may be prepared for our posterity, before the dawn that opens the more perfect day. Who can tell how long that fearful night may be before the dawn of a brighter morrow? The race of man may reach the promised land; but there is no assurance that the present generation will not perish in the wilderness." As if to render the situation more gloomy, if possible, the Marquis of Wellesley, the brother of Wellington, left the ministry upon the avowed ground that the government would not support the war with sufficient vigour. History has stripped his conduct of any such worthy motive, and

shown that the real trouble was his anxiety to supplant Mr. Perceval. At the same time, the attack was kept up in the opposite quarter. "No man in his senses," said Sir Francis Burdett, "could entertain a hope of the final success of our arms in the Peninsula. Our laurels were great, but barren, and our victories in their effects mere defeats." Mr. Whitbread, too, as usual, was not behindhand with his prophecies. "He saw no reason," he said, "to alter his views respecting peace; war must otherwise terminate in the subjugation of either of the contending powers. They were both great; but this was a country of factitious greatness. France was a country of natural greatness." So, General Tarleton "had the doctrine of Mr. Fox in his favour, who wished for the pencil of a Cervantes to be able to ridicule those who desired to enter upon a continental war."*

* The following description of the opposition of that day, taken from the *Annual Register* for 1812, bears so striking a likeness to the peculiarities of the leaders of an insignificant, but restless faction among us, that, omitting the old-fashioned drapery of the proper names, they seem to have sat for the photograph. "It may be remarked as a most singular circumstance, that those persons in this country who profess to have the greatest abhorrence of ministerial tyranny and oppression, look with the utmost coolness on the tyranny and oppression of Bonaparte. The regular opposition do not mention it with that abhorrence which might be expected from them; but the leaders of the popular party in Parliament go further. They are almost always ready to find an excuse for the conduct of Bonaparte. The most violent and unjustifiable acts of his tyranny raise but feeble indignation in their minds, while the most trifling act of ministerial oppression is inveighed against with the utmost bitterness. Ready and unsuspecting credence is given to every account of Bonaparte's success; while the accounts of the success of his opponents are received with cold-

Thus, from universal enthusiasm in favour of the Spanish war, public opinion, at first manifesting itself through the factious spirit of the opposition, at length spoke through all its organs, in tones of despondency and despair, of the situation and prospects of the country, and simply because there had not been that sort of military success which it could understand, to sustain and direct it. Universal distrust seized upon the public mind; and had it not been for the heroic constancy of that great commander, whose task in supporting the ministry at home was at least as difficult as that of beating the French in Spain, the glory of England had sunk for ever.

Yet it happened, as it so often happens in the order of Divine Providence, in the moral as in the physical world, that the night was darkest just before dawn. Amidst all this universal despondency and sinister foreboding, events were preparing which in a few short months changed the whole face of Europe, and forced back that torrent of revolutionary success which had spread over the whole continent, until it overwhelmed the country where it had its source in complete ruin. The discussions in Parliament to which we have referred, took

ness and distrust. Were it not for these things, the conduct of Mr. Whitbread and his friends would be hailed with more satisfaction, and inspire more confidence with the real lovers of their country; for they deserve ample credit for the undaunted and unwearied firmness with which they have set themselves against abuses and against every instance of oppression."

place in February, 1812. With the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, on the 18th of January of that year, with the fall of Badajoz on the 26th of March, the first battle of Salamanca on the 20th of July, and Napoleon's invasion of Russia in June in the same year, began the downfall of the French Empire.

Wellington at last reached Madrid in August, 1812, more than four years later than he ought to have done, according to the strategists of Parliament and the Press. This was all forgotten at the moment, so magic a wand is held by success. The fickle voice of popular applause was again heard, echoing the spirit of confidence which his persistent and undaunted conduct had revived in the hearts of his countrymen. His career of victory, however, was destined not to be unchecked; and when, after his occupation of Madrid, his unsuccessful assault upon the Castle of Burgos rendered a retreat to the Portuguese frontier and the evacuation of the capital a proper military movement, although that retreat was compensated for by the abandonment of Andalusia by the French, in order to concentrate their whole force against him, still the blind multitude could not be made to understand it, and began again to murmur.

It is not now difficult to see that the victory at Salamanca was really what the far-seeing sagacity of Marshal Soult predicted at the time it would become,

“a prodigious historical event,” that it was the pivot on which at that time hinged the destinies of England, one of those battles of which we see perhaps a dozen only in the whole course of history, which are really decisive of the fate of empires. It completely unloosed the French power in the Peninsula, and prepared the way for the great success of Vittoria, the next year, which gave the *coup de grace* to the French military occupation of Spain. It is not our present purpose to trace the history of the next campaign, but it is curious to observe the effects produced by assured success upon that public opinion which had shifted so often and so strangely during the progress of this eventful struggle. The opposition, as their only hope of escape from political annihilation, and thinking to swim with the popular current, abused the ministers for not supporting Wellington with sufficient earnestness, complaining that they had taken the advice which they themselves had so often and so eloquently tendered. But it was of no avail. This wretched charlatanism was too transparent to impose upon any one; and of the great party who opposed the war, no one ever after rose to office or power in England. It required a whole generation, in the opinion of the English constituencies, to expiate the faults of those who had sneered at the great Duke, and had called the glorious fields of Vimeiro, Busaco, Talavera, Fuentes d’Onor, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Badajoz, names which had become

associated with the proudest recollections of English renown, "mere barren victories, equal in their effects to defeats."

We pass now to the consideration of another class of difficulties inherent in the prosecution of every war, and generally of far greater magnitude than any other,—those connected with the raising of the vast sums of money required for the support of military operations. In this important matter, if we mistake not, there are some striking points of resemblance between the English experience during the war, and our present situation. It is the fashion among many who seek to excite the public alarm on this subject from unworthy, and sometimes, it may be feared, from treasonable motives, to represent the enormous outlay of the nation's wealth which is poured out to save the nation's life, as wholly unparalleled in history. Yet it may be asserted, without any fear of contradiction, that England, with a population then little more than half of that which now inhabits our loyal States, with resources infinitely less in proportion at that time than our own, her manufacturing industry, so far as external outlet was concerned, wholly crippled by the operation of the French continental system, and her own Orders in Council, expended, during every year of the Peninsular war, as large a sum as has been required here each year to create and keep up the gigantic force now in arms to put down the Rebellion. During the five

years that the war lasted, her average annual expenditure exceeded ninety millions of pounds sterling, or four hundred and fifty millions of dollars, which is about the same sum which is demanded of us. No one, of course, pretends to say that this rate of expenditure is not appalling, yet it concerns us to know that it is not unprecedented, and that these vast amounts have been raised from national resources far inferior to our own. It should not be forgotten, also, that they represent the money price of England's independence, and if ours is secured by a far greater outlay, we certainly are not disposed to quarrel with the wisdom of the investment.

The question is, how were these immense sums raised in England? The man who would have predicted, at the commencement of the war with France, that the English national debt would at its close exceed one thousand millions of pounds sterling, and that the country would be able to bear such a burden, would have been regarded as a visionary as wild as he who in this country, two years ago, might have foretold the present amount of our national debt, and have contended that, in spite of it, the public credit would remain unimpaired. The difficulty in England of raising these vast sums was tenfold greater than it is here. Napoleon, looking upon England as the Southern people have been taught to regard us, as a purely commercial nation, undoubtedly placed more reliance for ultimate success upon the instinct of

money getting, which would shrink from the pecuniary sacrifices necessary in a prolonged struggle, than upon the mere victories of his army. Hence he pursued, during his whole career, an inflexible purpose of ruining English commerce, and by a series of measures, known as the Continental system, endeavoured to exclude English ships and English products from the markets of the world. The effect of these measures, although not so serious as he wished and had anticipated, nevertheless crippled enormously the resources of England just at the period when they were most needed.

Taking the three years before the issuing of the Orders in Council and the vigorous enforcement of the Continental system, which were coincident in point of time with the commencement of the Spanish war, the average annual exports sank from fifty-seven millions to twenty-three millions, taking the average of three years after they had been in operation. Taxes were laid on at a most burdensome rate. The income tax was ten per cent., and besides, specific war taxes amounting to more than twenty millions a year were imposed. Notwithstanding all these taxes, the debt increased more than one thousand millions of dollars during the Peninsular war. Discontent and violence among the labouring classes became universal, and it was remarked that the achievement of the greatest victories in Spain was celebrated in England "amidst a popu-

lation who had been prevented by the burden of taxation on the absolute necessities of life, from securing a livelihood by the strictest industry, and thus pauperism had been generated throughout the land, a pauperism aggravated by a spirit of pillage, which it required a strong military force to repress." Bankruptcy and ruin fell upon the trading classes, and absolute exhaustion of the resources of the country seemed almost reached. The public stocks had sunk to such a degree that the three per cents., which are now always above 90 per cent., were rarely higher during the war than 65 per cent., and so depressed at last had the public credit become, that the last loan of the Continental war, that of April, 1815, was taken by the contractor at 53 per cent., and paid for in the depreciated paper of the day; and yet the Chancellor of the Exchequer was congratulated even by the opposition for having made "a good operation." The Bank was in a state of chronic suspension, the buying and selling of gold were prohibited to the public under severe penalties, and yet every gold guinea which was sent by the government to the army in Spain (and nothing else would answer the purpose of money in that country) cost thirty per cent. premium. How England survived all this complication of troubles is one of the marvels of history, but it is not our purpose to discuss that question. The great fact that the money required was somehow raised, is all that we have to do with

at present. When we have been at war for twenty years, and are forced, in order to raise the means of carrying it on, to submit to one tithe of the sacrifices which were endured by the English, we may then perhaps begin seriously to consider the money value of the Union.

The lesson which this review of the progress of the Peninsular war teaches, is, it seems to us, one of hope and encouragement, for if it shows anything, it proves clearly that in the support of public opinion, and in the means requisite to maintain a great army, those fundamental essentials of real military success, our Government is immeasurably stronger than the English ever was at any period of the war. It teaches also another important lesson, and that is, that there is such a thing as public opinion, falsely so called, which is noisy just in proportion as its real influence is narrow and restricted. One of the most difficult and delicate tasks of the statesman is to distinguish the true from this false opinion, the factious demagogue from the grumbling but sincere patriot, and to recognise with a ready instinct the voice which comes from the depths of the great heart of the people, in warning it may be sometimes, in encouragement often, but always echoing its abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of the good cause.

We have confined ourselves in our illustrations to the discussion of questions as they affected the

success of purely military operations, because we feel that *here* our grand business is to clear away the obstacles, real or fancied, which may in any way impair our military efficiency. In military success alone, we are firmly convinced, is to be found the true solution of our whole difficulty, the only force which can give vitality or permanence to any theory of settlement. As the matter now stands, it is idle to hope for either peace or safety until this question of military superiority is unmistakably and definitively settled. Upon this point then, the increase of our military efficiency, which embraces not merely the improvement of the condition of the army, but also, as we have endeavoured to show by English examples, and in a greater degree than is often supposed, the support of the Government in its general policy of conducting the war, should the efforts of all those who influence public opinion be concentrated.

There is a certain class of men among us, not very numerous, perhaps, but still, owing to their position and culture, of considerable influence, who, accustomed to find in the European armies their standard of military efficiency, are disposed to doubt whether a force, composed as ours is of totally different materials, can accomplish great results. We may admit at once the superiority of foreign military organization, the result of the traditions of centuries of military experience, digested into a thorough system, and carried out by long trained officers perfectly

versed in the details of the service. Much inconvenience has necessarily resulted in our case from the ignorance of Regimental Officers, to a greater degree probably, however, from a want of proper care and attention on their part to the troops when in camp, than from any gross incompetency or misconduct on the field of battle. Instances of such misconduct there have undoubtedly been, but, considering the number of the officers and their want of experience, those instances are extremely rare, and when we call to mind the number of officers who have fallen, while leading their men in battle, out of proportion, as it undoubtedly is, with the losses in other wars, we may well palliate deficiencies in this respect, out of considerations for their heroic gallantry and devotion. We do not underrate certainly the value of good officers, but history tells us that great victories have been achieved by armies who were no better led than ours. The incompetency of his officers was one of Wellington's standing complaints in Spain. Most of them knew absolutely nothing beyond the mere routine of garrison duty; they were all what is technically called "gentlemen," for each one had purchased his commission at a high price, but they had had no systematic training in military schools; nearly all of them had had no actual experience of war, and their average intelligence was undoubtedly below that of the men who hold

similar positions in our army.* All accounts agree that at that period the scientific branches of the great art of war were almost wholly neglected in the British army, and such was the happy ignorance of the elements of strategy, that at a court-martial composed of general officers for the trial of General Whitelock in 1808, for his failure at Buenos Ayres, it was necessary to explain to the court what was meant in military phrase by the "right bank" of a river.

It is said again, by those who have the standard of foreign armies always before their eyes, that among our soldiers there is not a proper deference to rank, too much *camaraderie* in short, and that this is fatal to discipline. But it should be remembered that mere formal discipline may be one thing, and the true spirit of discipline another, and yet both may answer the same purpose. The first may be more showy than the latter, but not more valuable to real military efficiency. Everything depends upon the cha-

* We have no room to enumerate in detail the complaints made by the Duke of the officers of his army. Those who are interested in the subject may consult Col. Gurwood's 4th volume, pages 343, 346, 352, 363, 385, 399, and 407. The whole story is summed up, however, in the general order occasioned by the disorderly retreat from Burgos, in which the Duke said "that discipline had deteriorated during the campaign in a greater degree than he had ever witnessed, or ever read of in any army, and this, without any disaster, or any unusual privation or hardship; that the officers had from the first lost all command over their men, and that the true cause of this unhappy state of affairs was to be found in the *habitual neglect of duty by the Regimental Officers.*" This is the army of which the Duke said later, that "with it, he could go anywhere and do anything," and, good or bad, it saved Europe—in the English sense.

racter of the soldier who is to be governed by it. The British army is composed, as we all know, of the refuse of the population, and in the war in the Peninsula it was largely reinforced by the introduction into its ranks of convicts taken from the hulks, who were there expiating infamous offences. With such men, motives based on a sense of duty were powerless. Drunkenness, theft, marauding, a mutinous spirit under privations, and a fierce thirst of license which defied all control in the hour of victory, these were the brutal passions which could only be checked by the equally brute hand of force. But from such a vile herd, made useful only as a slave is made useful, by fear of the lash, to the civilized, sober, well educated American citizen, animated with the consciousness that he is fighting for a great cause, in the success of which he and his children have a deep personal interest, and who learns obedience because both his common sense and his sense of duty recognise its necessity, how immeasurable is the distance! The American volunteer, in this respect, has not had justice done to his excellence. He is certainly a soldier essentially *sui generis*, and when we hear sneers at his want of discipline, let us remember that although he may not regard his officers as superior beings, yet experience has already shown that in the cheerful performance of his new duties under privations; in his freedom from those vices which in many minds are inseparably asso-

ciated with the very idea of a soldier; in his courage, endurance, and steadiness in battle; and, more than all, in those higher qualities which are the fruit of his education, general intelligence, and love of country, he presents himself to us as a figure hitherto wholly unknown in military history.

One of the most cruel statements which party rancour has circulated in regard to the condition of the army is, that the rate of sickness and mortality is excessive, and that this is due to the neglect of the Government. Fortunately we have the means of showing that these statements are false. From June 1, 1861, to March 1, 1862—nine months—the annual rate of mortality for the whole army is ascertained to be 53 in a thousand, and the sickness rate 104 in a thousand. The returns for the summer campaigns are not yet printed, but it will appear from them, that in the army of the Potomac on the 10th of June, after the battle of Fair Oaks, and while the army was encamped on the Chickahominy, the whole number of sick, present and absent, compared with the whole force of that army present and absent, was 128 in a thousand. During the stay of the army on the Peninsula it lost less than 14,000 men by death from disease and wounds, and the annual sickness rate during the campaign was about that which has for some time prevailed in the whole army, less than ten per cent. of the whole force. It appears, strange to say, that the army was

more healthy when in the trenches before Yorktown, than at any other period of the campaign. Compare this with the English experience. We have already said that Wellington lost about one-third of his whole army from malarious fever on his retreat from Talavera: on the 1st of October, 1811, the Anglo-Portuguese army had 56,000 men fit for duty, and 23,000 sick in hospitals; and in the Crimea, while the annual rate of mortality for the whole war was 232 in a thousand, the period of active operations, the last three months of 1854 and the first three months of 1855, shows the fearful rate of 711 deaths in every thousand men.

It cannot be doubted that to many the most unfavourable symptom of our present condition is the slow progress of our arms. This slowness is more apparent than real, for the history of modern warfare scarcely shows an instance in which so great real progress has been made in the same space of time, and it is manifest that whenever our northern soldiers have had a chance of fighting the enemy on anything like equal terms, they have fully maintained their superiority. It is none the less true, however, that public expectation in this matter has been much disappointed, and it is curious to look at some of the explanations given for it. The Prince de Joinville, in his recent pamphlet, speaking of the battle of Fair Oaks, and of the neglect to throw bridges over the Chickahominy at the proper time,

by means of which the whole rebel army might have been taken in flank, and probably destroyed, ascribes the neglect on one page to what he calls *la lenteur Américaine*, which he seems to think always leads our countrymen to let the chance slip of doing the right thing at the right time, and again on the next to "*faute d'organisation, faute de hierarchie, faute de lien, qui en résulte entre l'âme du chef et l'armée, lien puissant qui permet à un General de demander à ses soldats et d'en obtenir aveuglement ces efforts extraordinaires qui gagnent les batailles.*" In other words, General McClellan, knowing that he could gain a decisive victory by laying down half a dozen bridges, which, it is stated, were all ready for the purpose, actually refused to order his soldiers to do it, because he was afraid they would not obey his orders. And this is the Prince's judgment of an army, which, a few weeks later, according to his own account, fought five battles in as many days, all, with one exception, victories, over an enemy at least double its numbers, and arrived at its new base on the James River in excellent condition, and without the slightest taint of demoralization. This illustration shows the absurdity of ascribing the want of immediate success to *la lenteur Américaine*, a quality, by the way, which we learn for the first time, is one of our national characteristics.

Among the many causes which might be named, all perfectly legitimate, and presenting no obstacle

which a little experience will not remove, we venture to suggest but one, and that is the character of the early military education of our higher officers. The system pursued at West Point, although admirable for qualifying officers for the scientific and staff corps of the army, seems to fail in teaching the young soldier, what is just now the most important quality he can possess for command, the character and capacity of volunteer soldiers. The system of discipline he has been taught is that which governs the regular army, a system modelled upon the English, which is, with the exception of that in use in Russia, the most brutal and demoralizing known in any army in Europe. No wonder, therefore, that when our educated soldiers are suddenly placed in high positions, and with great responsibilities, and when they discover that the sort of discipline which they have been taught is wholly out of place in securing the efficiency of a volunteer army, they are led to doubt whether it can ever be made efficient at all. These prejudices, however, are wearing away before the test of actual experience. Generals are gradually learning that they may confide in their men, even for desperate undertakings; they begin to see in their true light the many eminent qualities of the volunteer; and he, in turn, begins to understand something of that military system which seemed at first so irksome and meaningless to him;

and the advance of the army in the essentials of discipline has been proportionably rapid.

There is a good deal of talk about the impossibility of conquering or subjugating the South, which is based upon very vague notions of what conquest and subjugation signify. It is surprising to find how even intelligent men have been imposed upon by this favourite boast of the rebels and their sympathizers. A pretended saying of Napoleon is quoted, that "it is impossible to prevent any people determined on achieving its independence, from accomplishing its purpose;" and it is confidently asked whether any one ever heard of the subjugation of twelve millions of people determined to be free. We reply, that history, ancient and modern, is full of instances of the only sort of conquest or subjugation which any sane man proposes shall be submitted to by the South. No one thinks it possible or necessary, for the purpose in view, to occupy the whole South with garrisons, but simply to destroy the only support upon which its arrogant pretensions are based, namely, its military power. This gone, what becomes of all the rest? and this remaining, where is there any hope of permanent peace and safety to us? For what is all war, but an appeal to force to settle questions of national interest which peaceful discussion has failed to settle; and what is an army but only another

argument, the *ultima ratio*, which, if successful in decisive battles, must give the law to the conquered? To say nothing of instances in ancient history, Poland, Hungary, and Lombardy, in our day, were just as determined to be free as the South is, and quite as full of martial ardour; and certainly Prussia, Spain under the Bonaparte dynasty, and the French Empire, are all examples of nations which valued their independence, and had tenfold the resources for maintaining it which the South possesses; yet the capture of Warsaw, the surrender of Villagos, the battles of Novara, of Jena, of Salamanca, and of Waterloo, respectively, settled as definitively the fate of the inhabitants of those countries, and their future condition, as if the terms imposed by the conquering army had been freely and unanimously agreed upon by the representatives of the people in Congress assembled. And, in like manner, can any one doubt, looking at the present comparative resources of the two sections, that if we should gain two decisive battles, one in the East and the other in the West, which should result in the total disorganization of the two rebel armies, and thus enable us to interpose an impassable barrier between them, we should soon hear a voice imploring in unmistakable accents peace on our own terms? It would not be a matter of choice, but of necessity; a simple question of how far the progress of exhaustion had been carried, and that once settled, and no rea-

sonable hope of success remaining, the war would not last a week longer. This is the experience of all nations, and our Southern rebels, notwithstanding their noisy boasting, do not differ in their capacity of resistance from the rest of mankind. "Hard pounding this, gentlemen," said the Duke of Wellington to his officers, as he threw himself within one of the unbroken squares of his heroic infantry at Waterloo, "*but we'll see who can pound the longest;*" and the ability of that infantry to "pound the longest" on that day settled the fate of Europe for generations.

Let us bend, then, our united energies to secure, as much as in us lies, success in the field, and that success gained, we may be sure that all things will follow. Let us recognise with confidence as co-workers in this great object all, never mind what opinions they may entertain about the causes of the war and the new issues which its progress has developed, who desire in all sincerity, no matter from what motive, the success of our arms. Upon such a basis, the wider and more catholic our faith becomes the better. "In essentials, Unity; in non-essentials, Liberty; in all things, Charity:" this should be our motto. The only possible hope for the South is in our own divisions. Let us remember that with success all things are possible; without it, all our hopes and theories vanish into thin air. With success in the field, we should not only disarm the rebellion, and

rid ourselves for ever of the pestilent tribe of domestic traitors by burying them deep in that political oblivion which covers the Tories of the Revolution, and those who sneered at the gallant exploits of our Navy in the war of 1812, but also force public opinion abroad, whose faithlessness to the great principles which underlie all modern civilization has been one of the saddest developments of this sad war, to exclaim at last, "*Invidiam gloriâ superâsti.*"



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